CHARLES E. SCHUMER
NEW YORK

COMMITTEES:
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BANKING
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RULES

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 27, 2004

The Honorable Allan Rutter
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
1120 Vermont Ave
Washington, DC 20590
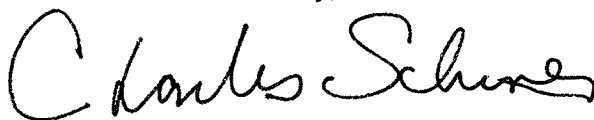
Dear Administrator Rutter:

I am writing to urge you to launch a full-scale investigation into the safety of rail lines in Rockland County, NY. I ask you to launch this investigation due to a derailment on the West Shore line in North Rockland that occurred last week, the third derailment in that area in the last six years.

Last week, a train of four hopper cars and a locomotive derailed while heading north in Haverstraw. While no one was hurt, 200 tons of the nonhazardous silicon metal cargo were spilled. The accident led to a partial evacuation of the nearby area and closed Route 9W and surrounding roads for hours. In October, a two-train derailment occurred in North Rockland and spilled fuel. Rockland officials report that it took CSX nearly five hours to notify them of the accident. In 1998, a 142-car Conrail train derailed off the West Shore Line along the Hudson in North Rockland. One of the cars broke loose and landed in the river, taking two others with it, while 27 other cars derailed and were crushed.

The continuing recurrence of dangerous mishaps warrants a comprehensive study that looks at whether there are large safety lapses throughout the area. In order to fully appreciate the scope and breadth of the problem, I would suggest that representatives of FRA come to Rockland County to meet with local officials and evaluate the safety of these rail lines first-hand.

I urge you to examine in your probe the safety of the cargo being hauled, the security of the tracks, the impact of vibrations caused by double-decker trains that carry large amounts of weight, and the responsiveness of CSX to derailments, spills, and other potential catastrophes. Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senate